

COVER ESSAY

Anti-tobacco floor tiles: a new medium to reach young people

Joseph P Dunn II, Justin Caulfield

Market Media (a wholly owned subsidiary of BPI Packaging Technologies, Inc), located in North Dighton, Massachusetts (USA), has an new and innovative approach to help children fight the advertising that has been aimed at them by big tobacco companies. The idea for Market Media's programme was conceived when the president of the company, Jill Beresford, who is the mother of one of the tobacco industry latest targets (her young daughter Bailey), learned of the staggering advertising expenditures used to influence smoking by young people.

She discovered that in the Federal Trade Commission's 1993 report to Congress,¹ it was shown that the tobacco industry spent \$6 billion in cigarette advertising and promotional expenditures that year. Fischer and colleagues reported that the rate at which Joe Camel was recognised as a symbol of smoking ranged from 30% of three-year-old children to 91% of six year olds.² Mizerski reported that Ronald McDonald, who unlike Joe Camel, appears on television during children's viewing hours, only has a recognition rate of 62% among six year olds.³

In a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) press release entitled *Children's future at risk from epidemic of tobacco use*, Ms Beresford read that the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that American healthcare costs associated with smoking totalled \$50 billion in 1993.⁴ The press release also noted that the Office of Technology Assessment calculated the social costs attributable to smoking in the United States at \$68 billion in 1990.

Ms Beresford does not want her daughter to join the ranks of the 3000 young people in the United States who become regular smokers each day (a third of whom will die prematurely due to a smoking-related illness),⁵ so she decided to take action. Along with Justin Caulfield, Market Media's newest account director, she is developing a programme to help children steer clear of becoming the tobacco industry's next victims. The idea: bring the anti-smoking message to children and young adults several times a day in school. The answer: the new Floor Focus Educational-Tile, which is a derivative of one of Market Media's proven advertising vehicles. The Educational-Tile (a billboard on the floor) will make it possible to deliver the anti-smoking message to students in a new way that will be

non-intrusive but easily noticed. The product will be effective, yet will not require any additional attention from the school staff during the year. The Educational-Tile is a standard commercial floor tile that, through a patented process, has a brilliant (magazine-quality) picture and message imbedded into the tile. This product is apt for the school environment because, in high-traffic areas (even higher than the busiest of schools), it has a lifespan of one to two years, and is resistant to scraping, scuffing, paint, pen, and indelible marker. The tiles are magnetised and installed on steel plates that can be removed by a BPI worker using a special tool.

The Educational-Tile is the 3x2 feet (91x61 cm) version of the 2x1 feet (61x30 cm) Floor Focus Ad-Tile, which has been proven to be an effective media vehicle in commercial stores. In the Tampa, Florida division of Winn-Dixie Supermarkets, Information Resources, Inc (IRI) measured the effectiveness of the Ad-Tile to increase point-of-purchase sales for advertised brands over a 12-week period. Several branded advertisers were evaluated in 100 test stores and compared with an equal number of control stores during the same time period. The test stores were matched to control stores of the same size, demographic composition of shoppers, brands carried, distribution network, price structure of brands, and sales and promotional efforts carried on in the stores during the test period. The only difference between the test stores and the control stores was the use of Ad-Tile. Between the weeks of 27 May 1996 and 18 August 1996, IRI tracked unit volume sales increases of 20% to 30% for brands using Ad-Tile.

The premise of the anti-smoking Educational-Tile is to take proven advertising and promotional tactics and strategies and use them to sell the image and lifestyle of the non-smoker to the young in grades kindergarten to 12 (ages 5-18 years). This approach is not only health based but also consumer based. By "selling" the image of the non-smoker, young people will actively choose to buy the non-smoker image by keeping their money and not buying tobacco products. This makes the non-smoker a marketable "brand" that is appealing to young people. Not only is non-smoking good for them, but it is attractive and a part of popular culture. The Educational-Tile was enlarged to 3x2 feet to



Figure 1 The anti-smoking Educational-Tile.

have a greater visual impact on the students in school.

The rationale behind the Educational-Tile programme in schools was to assure that the anti-smoking message would attain a reach of 100% of its targeted audience and have a frequency of several times a day. These are the two vital statistics that neither television, radio, nor any other media vehicle can provide. One goal of the programme is to work in conjunction with states that advertise anti-smoking messages on television and radio. This would help in facilitating a unified message to the student; the images that the students see in school would represent what they see and hear when they are at home or out in public. The Educational-Tile would complement the already fantastic work being done in this area by groups such as the Riester Corporation and Asher/Ghould, the creative agencies for Arizona and California's anti-tobacco commercials, respectively. The Educational-Tile can also be used effectively in an independent anti-smoking message campaign as it is currently being used in the pilot programme in Millis, Massachusetts.

Market Media has decided to absorb the cost to create a pilot programme for elementary school (grades kindergarten to 5, ages 5–11), middle school (grades 6–8, ages 11–14), and high school (grades 9–12, ages 14–18). The entire programme consists of three sub-programmes, one aimed at each school level and their appropriate grades. Each sub-programme will have four distinct images on the Educational-Tile that will convey the anti-smoking message on the floor. In total there will be 12 Educational-Tiles, which will be updated every year to keep the ideas fresh and current with the anti-smoking messages used for each targeted age group. The Educational-Tiles can also be "switched-out" (replace the existing Educational-Tile with a new one with a different image) every few months. This will help the anti-smoking message to remain new and captivating with the student population. Market Media also sponsored a contest for children in elementary,

middle, and high schools to design an anti-smoking Educational-Tile to be used in the pilot programme.

The objective of the entire programme is to have a long-term impact. The children will be exposed first to the anti-smoking message in elementary school, where their opinions about smoking are formed. By reinforcing this belief system (anti-smoking) through the middle and high school years, the programme will help children refuse tobacco when they are most prone to take up smoking and become addicted to the deadly behaviour. The programme also hopes to have a short-term effect by changing the minds of young people who are thinking about experimenting with smoking and those who have already started to smoke on a regular basis. Market Media does not see the programme as a "magic bullet" to be used alone, but rather as a powerful tool to be used in conjunction with the tobacco education already in place in American school systems.

With the help of Paul Jacobsen, Director of Constituent and Community Affairs for the Massachusetts Department of Health, and various regional directors of the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program, Market Media was able to identify the approach to take in creating a pilot programme for the young people of the "Bay State". Mr Jacobsen, Dr Caroline White (superintendent of the Millis Public School System), and Tom Deffley (principal of the Clyde Brown Elementary School in Millis) have been responsible for coordinating and implementing the pilot programme in Millis's schools.

The first four Educational-Tiles for the pilot programme were placed in the Clyde Brown Elementary School during March 1997; the middle and high school programmes will be finished and placed in the schools during the autumn of the 1997 school year. Examples are shown in figures 1 and 2 and on the cover of this issue of *Tobacco Control*.

When asked about the effect that the Educational-Tile programme was having on his students, Tom Deffley stated: "The anti-smoking tile programme has helped promote a vital message to our youngsters. It is through programmes like this, together with continued health education, that we can expect serious inroads to be made towards the goal of eradicating the use of tobacco products among our young people." The entire programme was officially unveiled by Senator John F Kerry on 6 June 1997 at his office in Boston, Massachu-



Figure 2 Anti-tobacco tile in place on a school floor.

setts. The senator was quoted as saying: "The best way to prevent smoking-related illness is to discourage young people from starting to smoke. These anti-smoking Educational-Tiles are a great way to reach kids and teach them that smoking is bad for them. We need to reinforce the message that kids and cigarettes don't mix."

The participants in this project feel that with support from school boards, health agencies, and legislatures at local, state, and federal levels, this will be a highly successful programme in the fight against tobacco use by young people. More comprehensive research data will be available in January of 1998; by that time Market Media hopes to have several large and ongoing pilot programmes estab-

lished in various states. Ultimately, Market Media aims to have a national programme in place within the next two years, reaching most students across the nation.

- 1 US Federal Trade Commission. *Federal Trade Commission report to Congress for 1993. Pursuant to the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act*. Washington DC: Federal Trade Commission, 1995.
- 2 Fischer PM, Schwartz MP, Richards JW, Goldstein AO, Rojas TH. Brand logo recognition by children aged 3 to 6 years. Mickey Mouse and Old Joe the Camel. *JAMA* 1991;266:3145-8.
- 3 Mizerski R. The relationship between cartoon trade character recognition and product category attitude in young children. Presented at the Marketing and Public Policy Conference, 13-14 May 1994.
- 4 Children's future at risk from epidemic of tobacco use. US Food and Drug Administration press release, 23 August 1996: <<http://www.fda.gov>>.
- 5 President Clinton announces historic steps to reduce children's use of tobacco. US Food and Drug Administration press release, 23 August 1996: <<http://www.fda.gov>>

Note to readers

We hereby solicit your ideas and contributions for future covers of *Tobacco Control*. As with previous covers, we would like future covers to be colourful and creative—with a tobacco control theme. Original artwork, anti-tobacco posters, photographs, and cartoons may all be considered. Material with an international flavour would be particularly desirable. A cover essay will generally appear in each issue to provide appropriate background information and commentary on the cover.

Please send ideas and submissions (original or high-quality, camera-ready photographs) to the editor at the address on the inside front cover.—ED



Smokes in the movies. Actress Julie Christie in the movie *Afterglow* (Sony Pictures Classics). The movie is about two married couples (one of which is played by Christie and Nick Nolte) who have affairs with each other's partners.